



Task Force 134 welcomes new leadership

**Story and photo
By Pfc. Eric J.**

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A change of command ceremony for Task Force 134, detainee operations, was held at Al Faw Palace June 6. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Douglas M. Stone transferred command to U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Garland P. Wright Jr..

"General Stone's performance has been strategic leadership at its finest," Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, Multi-National Force-Iraq commanding general, said. "He got the big ideas right, and he and his team turned them into realities. And for that we are very grateful."

"Thank you for your leadership, your vision, your energy and many other qualities you brought to Multi-National Force-Iraq and for the significant achievements of Task Force 134 on your watch



Army Gen. David Petraeus transfers authority of Task Force 134 to Navy Rear Adm. Garland Wright at Al Faw Palace June 6.

and under your leadership," Petraeus said. "You have been a true national and international asset in this position, and an invaluable part of our team. And we all wish the best of luck

to you and your family, and earn a well deserved promotion to lieutenant general. "It has been a tremendous privilege to have worked with so many Iraqis and have served the Iraqi people," Stone said. "In detainee operations we have been able to remain focused on the future of Iraq and the future of the people of Iraq."

One of Stone's greatest achieve-

ments in detainee operations were the Iraqis who leave U.S. custody and return to their families and prosper in the Iraqi society never again to take up arms against coalition forces or their fellow citizens, Stone said.

Stone has raised the standard of living in addition to providing education centers in all of the detainee compounds under his care. Detainees had even requested to stay so they could finish their educations before going back to their families.

"What we do in detainee ops is not perfect, but what we are building towards is long term security," Stone said. "It is my greatest hope that through our actions as a coalition, that all Iraqis will come to trust in us, and believe in our respect for their history, for their culture, for their individual dignity, knowing that we share the ultimate desire to bring about a great nation."

Progress in Iraq merits more attention, media coverage

By Lt. Matthew D. Brown

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I recently had a conversation with about 25 U.S. Soldiers. It was a terrific discussion, but nevertheless left me feeling a bit troubled. The troops and I talked about how we keep up on current events and how we take in the news while stationed on Victory Base Complex.

We went back and forth on coalition force progress, as they saw it, and talked about some things they might change if they could. Our talk was very enlightening, but I came out of the conversation wondering why they felt as if nothing good was coming as a result of their being here.

I was discouraged because as I thought about it...How would they know? How would any of us know? As a military (and to some extent as a country) we are inundated with bad news. And the moment that thought crept into my head I felt a little like our media might be running a propaganda campaign of their own, whereas if it's not "bad news" with respect to the war in Iraq; then it just isn't "news-news."

I am sure that some of this is a bi-product of the 24-hour cable news industry. I can only imagine

how difficult it must be to fill the 24 hours of time with "late-breaking" "must see" news. There is only so much heartwrenching material to go around and if they run out of tear-jerkers brought to us by the war in Iraq, a clip of Britney Spears might bring more of a viewing audience than the slow and unsteady process of rebuilding an entire country.

It would be unfair for me to use this column to drive some sort of political agenda, so I won't. The objective here is not to justify what we are doing, or how we got here, but rather to recognize some of the less publicized Iraqi achievements to which our troops have directly contributed.

I was fortunate enough have to this information forwarded to me via e-mail by a colleague of mine. She qualified the e-mail by saying that the folks who wrote it are traditionally known for being "a little conservative." And as I read it, I have to admit I was at first little skeptical.

My cynicism was shortlived because as I discovered all of the facts are easily verified on any number of Department of Defense publications to include, <http://www.defenselink.mil/>. So without further commentary, here are just a few examples of the very real progress coalition forces are making right here in Iraq.

*47 countries have reestab-

lished their embassies in Iraq.

*The Iraqi government currently employs 1.2 million Iraqi people.

*3,100 schools have been renovated, 364 schools are under rehabilitation, 263 new schools are now under construction and 38 new schools have been completed in Iraq.

*Iraq's higher educational structure consists of 20 universities, 46 institutes or colleges and four research centers.

*Talented Iraqi students departed for the United States in January 2005 for the re-established Fulbright Scholar program.

*The Iraqi navy is operational. Its fleet consists of five 100-foot patrol craft, 34 in-shore patrol vessels, and a naval infantry regiment.

*Iraq has established counter-terrorism and commando units.

*The Iraqi police have more than 55,000 fully trained and equipped police officers. To be fair this is a work in progress, but as you can see the 55,000 is a large number of interested Iraqi citizens.

*There are five police academies in Iraq that produce more than 3,500 new officers each eight weeks.

*There are more than 1,100 building projects going on in Iraq. They include 364 schools, 67 public

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Conference brings hope to Iraqi women



Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, Multi-National Division North, commanding general, takes time after the group photo to talk to a few Iraqi women about their concerns in their region. During the conference women had the opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions about different situations.

Story and photo by Marine Cpl. Frances L. Goch
MNC-IPAO

A Declaration of Sentiments was signed by 68 women and 32 men in Seneca Falls, NY 160 years ago, setting an agenda for the U.S. women's rights movement. From this, a set of 12 resolutions, calling for equal treatment of women and men, was adopted.

Today, women in the United States of America are still fighting for equal rights, but they are not alone. Now, the women of Iraq are fighting for their right to be treated as equals in their

society.

On June 4, women from different regions of Iraq came together to discuss problems and progress in each of their regions at the For the Future of Iraq conference in Irbil, organized by Multi-National Division -North, in hopes of gaining momentum to the women's rights movement.

"The goal of this conference is to get the woman's voice heard," said Rasheda Zaher, director of relations, Ministry of Education, Baghdad.

Some of the topics discussed were educational rights, childcare for working women, and laws protecting women from oppression and abuse.

"From these conferences we can form the basis for raising awareness to fix problems where they are actually happening and not where we think they are happening," said Zaher.

But not all talk was of oppression and despair. The women also spoke of progress in their regions. For example, in Kirkuk, 120 women just graduated from the police academy and will be the first women in Iraq

to serve on the Iraqi police force.

The women of Iraq are not alone in their fight, there were several men in attendance to include Maj. Gen. Mark P. Hertling, Multi-National Division -North commanding general and Brig. Gen. James C. Boozer, 1st Armored Division, deputy commanding general support.

Hertling wanted the conference to bring something special to the women of Iraq "... I just want to give them hope. The next steps are determined by what they do to bring a touch of good to their regions."

The Iraqi and Kurdish men in attendance had a lot to say as well.

"I think this conference is great. It opens the door for women so they know their opinions are important too," said a Kurdish man attending the conference. "We want women to move to the front, not to keep getting pushed to the back. This way man and woman can walk hand in hand beside each other."

Although they have a long road ahead of them, the women of Iraq know they are not alone. Other women have traveled this road before them.

Military Happenings



High tech system increases mission capabilities

Army News Service - As Land Warrior reaches its first anniversary in combat, the Army is seeking to equip an entire brigade combat team with the high-tech system which increases mission speed and effectiveness and decreases risks to the warfighter.

Land Warrior is a modular fighting system that uses state-of-the-art computer, communications, and global positioning technologies to digitally link Soldiers on the battlefield. The system is integrated with the Soldier's body armor and has a helmet-mounted display.

Marine declared "not guilty" in Haditha deaths

Marine Corps News Service - A court martial has acquitted a US Marine for his role in the deaths of 24 civilians in Haditha in Iraq in 2005, the sixth man to be exonerated in the affair.

Lieutenant Andrew Grayson, 27, was declared "not guilty on all charges" by a jury, said a spokesman for the Camp Pendleton military base in southern California where the hearing started on May 28.

He was the first Marine to stand trial in connection with the killings of 24 men, women and children in Haditha, the most

serious war crime allegations leveled at US forces since the 2003 invasion to topple Saddam Hussein.

Air Force chiefs resign

Air Force News Service - The military and civilian chiefs of the U.S. Air Force are resigning.

U.S. officials say that Defense Secretary Robert Gates asked Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Moseley and Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne to step down.

There was no immediate word on who would be nominated to replace Moseley and Wynne. Press secretary Dana Perino said President George W. Bush knew about the resignations but that the White House "has not played any role" in the shakeup.

Navy remains ready to help cyclone victims

Navy News Service - US helicopters and small boats are still ready to help deliver cyclone aid to Myanmar, a US official said Thursday, after the regime rejected US navy ships laden with emergency supplies.

Four US Navy ships, which had idled off Myanmar's coast since May 13, left for the Gulf of Thailand on Thursday after the ruling junta refused to accept aid from foreign militaries.

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clinics, 15 hospitals, 83 railroad stations, 22 oil facilities, 93 water facilities and 69 electrical facilities.

*4.3 million Iraqi children were enrolled in primary school by mid October.

*96 percent of Iraqi children under the age of 5 have received the first two series of polio vaccinations.

*There are 1,192,000 cell phone subscribers in Iraq and phone use has gone up 158 percent.

*Iraq has an independent media that consists of 75 radio stations, 180 newspapers and 10 television stations.

It is important for us as warriors to have vision past our political position on the war, and through the

less than fair and balanced news coverage that our media has been providing lately. It is impossible to fight if you do not recognize the good that has come of our efforts here. With one eye on our past successes we must keep the other focused on our mission, allowing for a successful, responsible, and expeditious redeployment home.